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COMMONWEAL

A Review of Religion, Politics, and Culture

December 21, 2001

Christ
A Crisis in the Life of God

Daniel Murtaugh reviews
Jack Miles

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To the Editors

Dead fowl

I am less pessimistic about young Catholics than either James Fisher ("Young American Catholics," November 23) or Peter Steinfels ("The Next Generation: A Diagnosis," November 23), but their impressions on the subject are worth more than the book, *Young Adult Catholics*, because they do not pretend to social science professionalism. With the exception of the chapter on Catholic identity, the data on which the book is based are statistically worthless. One cannot make valid estimates from it to the Catholic population of young adults. Half the primary sampling units (dioceses) were chosen because they were near the homes of the researchers. Parishes within the dioceses were chosen "in consultation" with the local chancery offices. This is not professional research methodology. In the harsh language of the trade about such flawed sample designs: garbage in, garbage out. One might just as well read the entrails of dead fowl. It is time that the Lilly Endowment realize that such projects disgrace it. It is time also for *Commonweal* to make a policy of asking someone at Fordham or Columbia or NYU to read the technical appendix of a book and determine the adequacy of the sample design before it decides to make a *gantze tsimmes* out of it.

(REV.) ANDREW M. GREELEY
Chicago, Ill.

The reviewer replies:

I greatly appreciate how survey data, including Andrew M. Greeley's, can correct our otherwise subjective impressions. At the same time, I have never encountered a social science survey on a nontrivial topic that was without shortcomings. If the sample design was perfect, the wording of some important questions was debatable. If the questions were worded superbly, other crucial questions went unasked. And there were always the less visible problems of actual execution: the skill and accuracy of the telephone interviewers, the number of times people were called back, the hours and days of the phone calls, the length of the calls and number of questions that could reasonably be asked. There are always trade-offs of time, money, convenience, etc.

Among social scientists whose work I have used, again including Greeley's, the authors of *Young Adult Catholics* are outstanding in describing their methodology clearly and in detail, including their choice of nearby dioceses (p. 243) and need for episcopal cooperation, and in exploring the kinds and degrees of bias that may have resulted. "One cannot make valid estimates" from their data "to the Catholic population of young adults," Father Greeley declares. That merely echoes what I wrote in my essay ("the young adults of this study do not represent all current young adult Catholics") and what the authors themselves repeatedly (pp. 40, 72, 116, 242, and elsewhere) acknowledge.

I was certainly not uncritical of this study, its presentation of data, or its interpretations. Yet readers can easily recognize what its sample of traceable confirmands represents and does not represent, can take into consideration what adjustments its biases seem to call for, and can use its findings as useful approximations until something better comes along. This may not be heaven, but it is not "worthless," "garbage," "the entrails of dead fowl," or a "disgrace" either.

The tone of Greeley's letter is not exactly surprising; indeed, after all these years, it borders on the traditional. But what it adds to the clarity, usefulness, or persuasiveness of his criticism escapes me.

PETER STEINFELS

Nostalgia with flair

As always, Father Andrew Greeley addressed with flair a relevant church issue in his "A Cloak of Many Colors" (November 9). He laments the passing of sacramentals such as a proliferation of statues and praying the rosary. I question whether these practices have been completely eliminated. Nostalgia is always attractive, and restoration seems to attract a new generation of Catholic seminarians. Perhaps what has happened is that we are hearing a better theology. Some of the older sacramentals have moved to the periphery, and a practice of the faith in which "sacramentals" such as altar, ambo, Scripture, assembly, and sacramental signs of water, bread, and wine moved to the center. We have to surround these with new and appropriate "metaphors." Isn't that what renewal is about?

(REV.) TONY SCHUMACHER
Oregon, Wisc.

A joke, right?

The November 9 article by Andrew Greeley was so funny that I thought it was "tongue in cheek"!

He must be writing from the privileged point of view of a male Catholic priest. For the laity, the laws of the church made it a faith of fear, constant guilt, and a sense of never matching up to the demands of the clergy.

If Greeley thinks that as the people of God we are defined by such externals as fish on Friday, having rosary beads, and being capable of plainchant, then how far are we from being disciples of Christ? Vatican II

(Continued on page 4)

The next issue of Commonweal will be dated January 11, 2002

A Happy Christmas to All

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COMMONWEAL

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was meant to bring us back to the simplicity of the gospel call, "love God and neighbor." The emphasis is on "love" and not on following rules. We should be seen to be Catholics by our actions.

The changes made many of us reassess our faith to see whether our actions were in line with what the gospel demanded, not with the rules of the church. Many of us have seen Mary as the example to follow, because she loved so much—not because she is a pale submissive creature, but because she is a magnificent woman. She took on the pain and suffering implicit in the human condition because she loved and accepted; but she is fully human, not quasi-divine. We revere her greatly for those qualities. She isn't remote, up on pillars and clouds.

By including this article, you made my day. I haven't laughed so much in years. BARBARA GREEN

Prince Edward Island, Canada

Thumbs down

Your November 23 cover was not only tasteless but offensive. It is beyond anything I could possibly expect from *Commonweal*. Please maintain your standards of art as well as of writing. CORA MCLAUGHLIN

Albany, N.Y.

Those young Catholics

The set of articles on young Catholics in the November 23 issue was impressive and rewarding. Last year I sent fifteen subscriptions to Catholic college students via *Commonweal*'s college subscription program, and after reading these articles, I can see that you are paying attention to these folks. Thank you. TERRY DOSH

Minneapolis, Minn.

Inadequate answers

It is painful to see the September 11 tragedy reduced to tautology, and that is what you are doing in your response to Colacino, et al. (Correspondence, November 23). No one excuses terrorism, but in seeking to understand the causes, hopefully we can avoid future tragedies. And the causes that Archbishop Martino ennumerates are not being solved by our war in Afghanistan, our near hysterical police-state mentality at home, our continued docility toward Israel, our policies that starve Iraqis and kill their children, our support of totalitarian regimes in the Arab world, or our miserly financial assistance to some of the world's most abused and wretched people.

What is most depressing is that our political leaders know this and I suspect so do most of the intellectual leaders of this country. But we all seem paralyzed by the enormity of the hatred of us and we can react only in killing spasms. JOSEPH D. POLICANO

East Hampton, N.Y.

Winter's visitor

It is clear that E. F. Roberts's perspective ("Florida Façades," November 23) is that of a "winter inhabitant," including a lack of understanding of the area that can be acquired by a real, year-round commitment to the community. This is exemplified by:

1. His reference to "the local church," ignoring the fact that six other churches exist within the area. He did not comment on the extraordinary vitality of the parish life of Saint John the Evangelist parish (clearly described), including twenty-five plus new Catholics each year through their RCIA program, their youth program, youth liturgies, or many other exhibitions of Catholic community involvement.

2. His uninformed (because of nonpermanent status) position on the results of the community Masses with the migrant workers in Immokalee. He did not mention that after the hunger strike of 1999, there was an almost 25 percent increase in wages paid. The migrants were looking for a 50 percent increase, and it was justified; but to suggest that the hunger strike was ignored is incorrect.

JOHN T. CONROY JR.

Naples, Fla.

When rich move in

E. F. Roberts refers to the cathedral in Santa Fe, New Mexico, as a "mission cathedral." Ecclesiastically, New Mexico was probably considered to be a mission country in 1869 when, under John Baptist Lamy, the cornerstone for the present cathedral was laid. But the architectural style of the cathedral was and is Romanesque, reminiscent of the architecture of ArchbishopLamy's Auvergne birthplace and childhood home.

Otherwise, Roberts's account of the plight of Naples, Florida, sadly reflects the similar plight of the city of Santa Fe, where wealth has moved in, huge homes, apartment complexes, and condominiums have been built, boutiques beyond number have overtaken the core of the city, and a glop of peudo-Southwestern culture has been spread over the entire city to attract the credulous tourist dollar. *Sunt lacrimae rerum!*

(REV.) GEORGE F. WERNER

Edgewood, N.M.

Christ or Herod

Thanks for your fine coverage of September 11 and its appalling aftermath. The monks of Gethsemani were encouraged by the abbot to drop their usual monastic work on the afternoon of the eleventh, and go to church and pray for God's mercy, peace, and forgiveness.

One of the most sensible reflections I read since then was Paul Elie's "The Innocents" (October 12). It certainly helped to make sense of the whole tragic affair by recalling the slaughter of the holy innocents in Matthew 2. Elie asks the right question of us all: "Will we be more like Christ, or more like Herod?" Everything depends on our choice. (BRO.) PATRICK HART

Trappist, Ky.

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Commonweal, [ISSN 0010-3330] A Review of Public Affairs, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, is published biweekly except Christmas/New Year's; and monthly July and August, by Commonweal Foundation, 475 Riverside Drive, Rm. 405, New York, NY 10115. Telephone: (212) 662-4200. E-mail: commonweal@msn.com. Web: http://www.commonwealmagazine.org. Toll-free: 888-495-6755. Fax: (212) 662-4183. Display advertising correspondence should be sent to Roth Advertising, Inc., P.O. Box 93, Sea Cliff, NY 11579 (516) 674-8603, classified advertising correspondence to 475 Riverside Dr. POSTMASTER: send address changes to Commonweal, 475 Riverside Dr., Room 405, New York, NY 10115.

Commonweal is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Index of American Periodical Verse, Book Review Digest, and Book Review Index. Microfilm from Vol. 1, 1924, to current issues available through University Microfilm, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and on Microfiche from Bell & Howell, Wooster, OH 44691. *Commonweal* articles are also available at many libraries and research facilities on CD-ROM and in electronic data bases. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional offices. Copyright © 2001 Commonweal Foundation. Single Copy, $2.50. Yearly subscriptions, U.S., $44; Canada, $49; foreign, $54. Special two-year rate: U.S. $75; Canada, $81; foreign, $87. Annual rates for air-mail delivery outside U.S.: Western Hemisphere, $84; Europe, $89; other parts of the world, $99. All Canadian and foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollars by International Money Order or by check on a U.S. bank.

Illustrations: Cover design: Christopher Young; cover art: courtesy William Heinemann/Random House; pp. 3, 9, courtesy Don Wycliff; pp. 3, 16, courtesy Fox Searchlight Pictures; p. 7, Valery; p. 13, Schwadron; p. 18, courtesy WGBH, Boston; p. 20, Ross, Rothco; p. 21, courtesy Alfred A. Knopf; p. 31, Antonucci; Columnist portraits, Elaine Mills.

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An unholy land

The war Israel is fighting against terrorism is not the same war the United States is fighting. The origins, responsibilities, and resolutions of the two are distinct and U.S. identification with Israel's war seems only to bring greater conflict to the Middle East.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's December 2 visit with President George W. Bush, with its photo-op handshake, signaled U.S. assent to Israel's current policies. If we are to be an honest broker, we must maintain a greater distance from Sharon. Sharon was unexpectedly headed back to Israel because of three suicide bombings in which twenty-five were killed and many injured. The continuing Hamas suicide bombings are horrible, and in that sense, yes, terrorism is terrorism whether it occurs in New York or Jerusalem. But what about Israeli incursions into and shelling of Palestinian areas? What shall we call them?

Though Arafat is responsible for the current intifada, Sharon shares with him responsibility for the downward spiral of violence. Arafat was foolish to let the settlement offered in summer 2000 pass without negotiations. The subsequent election of Sharon has pitted two hard-liners against one another, both engaged in *politique du pire*. There are people in Israel and in the Sharon administration as ready to drive the Palestinians from the West Bank as there are Palestinians wanting to drive Israel from the Middle East. Continuing Israeli settlement of the West Bank and Gaza; expropriation of Palestinian land by means legal and not; the destruction of Palestinian homes and the military occupation of Palestinian areas; the uprooting of olive tree groves by Israeli settlers and their terrorizing and shooting of Palestinian civilians; the disruption to daily life by Israeli checkpoints—none of these is as dramatic as suicide bombers. But, taken together, they have many of the same effects: Palestinian children are shot in the street and blown up coming from school; civilians are directly targeted and wounded or killed; Palestinians are driven to despair. Americans have so long been Israel's ally that we have blinded ourselves to the degree that the Israeli government and the settlers oppress the Palestinian people.

The Israelis, confident of U.S. support, will press their military and economic advantage, perhaps succeeding at what the most radical parties want—possession of the whole of the West Bank, perhaps Gaza, and the expulsion of the Palestinians. Dethroning Arafat, which now appears to be Sharon's policy, will give Hamas ever greater authority, but to what end? The Palestinians, despairing of ever emerging from this struggle, will only increase their suicidal intransigence.

A cease-fire and negotiations must be pressed once again. The United States, Canada, the European Union, Egypt, and Jordan, along with other willing states need to draw the warring sides into a sober consideration of their downward path. If credible and forceful international calls for a cease-fire are not heeded, then sanctions against both parties should be considered. The Bush administration closed down the U.S. Holy Land Foundation, which sends money to Hamas schools and social services, on charges that these funds also support terrorist activities. What of similar funds to schools in Israel that teach that the West Bank is an inalienable part of the biblical patrimony and must be part of the na-

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tion of Israel? What about philanthropic funds to Israeli settlers who build illegally in East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank? The longer this conflict continues the more gruesome the outcome, the more Israelis and Palestinians will adopt the most brutal tactics of the other.

December 11, 2001

WARRING ETHICS

The war in Afghanstan between Taliban and the Northern Alliance bears an eerie resemblance to the war between Trojans and Athenians in the *Iliad*: courage, steadfastness, deceit, and revenge. Does the warrior ethic of the Afghans harken back to the ancient code embedded in Homer's account, or is it the natural ethic of a culture dominated by warlords? A Pashtun saying sums it up: "Me against my brother, my brother and me against our cousins, we and our cousins against the enemy." Clearly the Afghans battle one another by an ethic different than that of the United States and its allies, the military of sovereign states subject to international law and their own rules of engagement.

News stories from the fronts in Mazar-e-Sharif, Kunduz, and Kandahar have reported chaos on the ground, men rushing from one front to another and then milling about waiting to fight. At the same time, there appears to be a set of rules intended to stave off battle, and perhaps save lives. The "victories" of the Alliance, in north and south, follow rounds of skirmishing and negotiating rather than pitched battles. Surrendering Taliban warriors have been greeted with open arms; some are amnestied, while others, especially foreign Taliban, are imprisoned. Some Taliban surrender their weapons, others apparently do not. Booty is taken—Toyota trucks and plunder from the bodies of the dead. At the same time, it is likely that Taliban military assets, including their leaders, are being hidden to fight another day. Changing sides is an accepted practice among the Afghans: Some warlords frankly admit that their allegiance goes to the winning side—once it was the Taliban, now the Alliance. And next year?

This is war, Afghan style. Taking prisoners, being a prisoner, or caring for prisoners appears not to be part of the tradition. Nor are civilians exempt from use as shields. It is these ethical differences that are likely to bring scrutiny from human-rights groups, who give every indication of holding the United States responsible for departure from international standards. There have been reports of summary executions of prisoners in the field and of Alliance soldiers parading prisoners on the streets for *baksheesh* (tips). An uprising of prisoners at the Qala Jangi fort left over two hundred Taliban dead, but not before an American and forty Alliance soldiers were killed. Had the prisoners given up their weapons? Did they seize weapons? Did they really see themselves as prisoners, or soldiers carrying on the war by other means? Were they wantonly killed by their captors?

East meets West, clashing cultures, clashing ethics—it will be difficult to establish what rules apply, and when. As for soldiers milling about, there is much to be said for the Afghan ethic of skirmish and surrender. As for prisoners, the Geneva Conventions seem a better bet. At the current juncture, it is obvious that international law, and the just-war ethic as well, are at odds with the Afghan warrior ethic, and vice versa. It seems unlikely that they will buy our ethic. So for now, we will have to learn whether—or to what extent—we can live with theirs.

December 11, 2001

ET CETERA

In Bethlehem ■ Over the past year, as parts of the West Bank have been sealed off, pregnant women have been unable to reach the only maternity hospital, Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem. Until the start of Intifada II, the hospital delivered three thousand babies a year, and treated approximately fourteen thousand women, many of whom faced high-risk pregnancies. Over the past year, as access to the city of Bethlehem has been restricted by Israeli controls, the number of births has fallen in the hospital. In addition, its mobile unit—a truck equipped to offer prenatal examinations and deliver babies in remote areas—has been unable to function because of travel restrictions. The hospital, nonetheless, has carried on, even under direct fire.

In mid-October, when Israeli Defense Forces occupied parts of the West Bank, including Bethlehem, the hospital found itself threatened. On October 20, a building adjacent to its oxygen depot burnt out of control because Israeli tanks barred the way to fire engines. Only the intervention of the mayor and the French consul brought help. The following three nights the hospital grounds and buildings were shelled and shot at by Israeli tanks and helicopters with damage to the grounds and to several buildings. Windows in the intensive care nursery and patients' rooms were shattered. A crèche in the complex, which usually houses and cares for some sixty babies and young children, had to be evacuated to more secure rooms and hallways to prevent injuries and to calm the children.

The hospital, which flies the Vatican and French flags, is a landmark in Bethlehem. Its siege might be attributed equally to Palestinian fighters and Israeli military who chose to fight in the neighborhood. Equally, except that, on the afternoon of October 24, an Israeli tank, according to an affidavit signed by three witnesses, "stopped at the intersection in front of the hospital, turned its tower towards the entrance of the hospital, and without any reason whatsoever, opened fire with a heavy machine gun."

During the eleven-day incursion of the Israeli forces, one baby, born prematurely, died because its parents could not reach the hospital; nineteen babies were safely delivered. The hospital complex belongs to a French community of the Sisters of Charity; the maternity hospital is supported by the Knights of Malta. Why should a tank fire at it?

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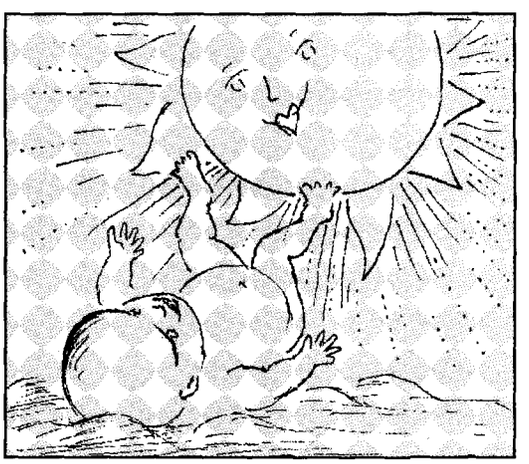
JO McGOWAN

AN ANNUNCIATION, OF SORTS

Where faith & fear collide

Three times in the past two years I have been almost certain I was pregnant. Whether this says more about passion or carelessness, I don't want to speculate on here. The fact is that at the age of forty-three, with as large a family as my husband and I "think" we can handle, I still found myself—three times in two years!—in that surreal, supercharged world of the possibly pregnant. It is a world only women can imagine.

Oh, my husband was there with me, especially the first, most dramatic time when I even had a pregnancy test and we wandered around the bazaar for the two hours we had to wait for the result (no instant tests in Dehra Doon), veering sharply from the mundane ("Do we need bread?") to the eternal ("What if I am?") with all the practiced ease of an old married couple. He was there whenever I needed to talk, listening to my fears and doubts, reassuring, encouraging, and helping me to think it all through.



But he couldn't really imagine what it was like, couldn't really understand how an idea can lodge in the mind and never not be there, how every waking thought can somehow be traced to the possibility of a new life poised to take over, of one's womb being occupied again. It is part of being a woman, in some ways more intensely spiritual than the actual fact of being pregnant.

Once the thing has been established as a reality, one has no choice but to adjust to it. It is that period before certainty, when the mind keeps darting between the two possibilities—each one so full of itself, each one so absolute—that allows, or forces, so much truth-telling and clarity, such a heightened sense of what is important and what is not. Because once it is one or the other, the rationalizations begin, the accommodating, the acceptance. It is difficult, then, to trust one's perceptions, burdened as they are with the effort either of continuing life as it was or welcoming a new one.

All three times, in between the obsessive figuring and refiguring of dates, I imagined in detail just how my world would change. Detail: I could actually feel the swoops and glidings of the baby in the seventh month. I practiced my breathing exercises and shook my head as I remembered pushing my last child out with "never again" playing over and over in my mind. I felt once more the sweet negligible weight of a newborn head on my shoulder, noted the almost imperceptible relaxation as he dropped into sleep like a small pebble sinking in a well, practiced again the deft art of transferring him from shoulder to cradle without disturbing his rest.

I rescheduled all my plans in the light of this stranger. The work I had thought to spread out over a year would now have to be compressed into the eight months I had left. In my mind, the trip to Bombay was postponed, the furniture in the children's rooms provisionally rearranged, depending on whether we got a girl or a boy, and the independence I had looked forward to enjoying eventually postponed by another eighteen years.

On all three occasions, however, it turned out I was wrong. And each time I was freshly surprised by my mixed feelings at the news. But it was the most recent drama which was the most distressing. I waited for ten days with far more than my usual anxiety. Before I was aware of pregnancy being a possibility, I had had several glasses of wine, taken a painkiller for a back problem, and, worst of all, had had a mammogram. *And* I was forty-three years old.

The strange and starkly outlined world I then inhabited seemed full of chasms, deep and yawning and just waiting for me to step into them. The idea that I could still emerge with a normal, healthy baby was just one of the options I couldn't take seriously. The other was that this could be yet another false alarm. Somehow, in the eye of the storm, only the most extreme outcomes seemed likely.

My husband, as usual, was full of serene composure. "The baby could be perfectly normal," he pointed out. "Look at Lucy [my youngest sister, born when my mother was forty-four]. Or Mary [the smartest one in our family, during whose first trimester my mother had German measles]. Where's your faith?"

Where indeed? The fact is, however, that faith is no protection against disability or any other kind of suffering. But my husband had an answer for that, too, although it was in Hindi: *"Jo Bhagwan karte hai, bhalla ke liye karte hai."* Which roughly translates as, "Whatever God does, he does for our benefit." At the time, it didn't help much.

Now that I know that I am not pregnant, I can afford to be expansive and accept the truth of what my husband said. But the recognition of my anxiety has brought me up short. It's all very well to speak of faith when it isn't being tested. Had things turned out differently, I wonder how well I would have done at accepting God's plan for me this time. □

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PAUL BAUMANN

AT SEA

Adventures in the Caribbean

Rand Richards Cooper, known as "Cooper" to his friends, is best known to *Commonweal* readers as this magazine's loquacious film critic. However, since *Commonweal* cannot afford to pay its contributors much, Cooper must lead several other lives, including that of travel and food writer. In that guise he writes for such glossy publications as *Islands* magazine and *Bon Appétit*, which send him to places like the Greek islands to sip the ouzo and Berlin to sample the bratwurst. Tough assignments. I've warned him that living on a generous expense account will clog his arteries and endanger his immortal soul. He says I'm jealous.

He's right.

Last month Cooper got a sudden commission to go on a ten-day Caribbean cruise. Since his free cabin could accommodate two, he asked if I'd like to go along. Impossible, I thought. After all, I had a magazine to put out. Besides, how could I leave my wife alone with three kids? When I tentatively broached the subject my wife's response was curiously enthusiastic. "Can't he make it twenty days?" she asked with seeming glee. My boss had a suspiciously similar response. "How about thirty days?" she said. I guess it was time for me to take a vacation.

We flew to Fort Lauderdale, where we were picked up and taken to nearby Port Everglades, a veritable Home Depot of cruise ships. Our ship, the *Zaandam*, is part of the Holland America line. The captain and most of the officers were Dutch and much of the crew Indonesian. Colonialism's legacy seemed very much alive.

Like most cruise ships, the *Zaandam* is big: at least ten stories high, 780 feet long, 63,000 tons, and replete with everything from two swimming pools to a casino and a movie theater. It also had three banks of elevators, 1,500 passengers, 700 crew, and a labyrinthine kitchen twisting through its innards like the tunnels and burial chambers in an Egyptian pyramid. Alas, the food was nothing to e-mail home about, but the "Parade of the Baked Alaska" through the darkened dining room on the last night, to Straussian martial music and illuminated by sparklers, was a moment of transcendent kitsch.

"Cruising," as we learned to call it, attracts a mature clientele. Neither Cooper nor I is exactly youthful, but on the *Zaandam* we qualified as teenagers. Waiting two hours to board, we had an opportunity to compile a profile of our fellow passengers. "This looks like the departure for that *final* cruise," Cooper whispered apprehensively as we cast an eye over our nodding shipmates. As the saying goes, cruise ships are filled with the "newly wed, overfed, and nearly dead." It promised to be a very calm voyage.

As it turned out, the schedule of shipboard "activities," both social and recreational, was rather daunting. Happily, our four nightly dinner companions, a retired couple from Long Island and a mother and her adult daughter from Tucson, proved exceedingly friendly and enthusiastic. We formed a convivial little platoon. Like most people on the ship, they were veteran "cruisers" who knew their way around. (We encountered one retired couple who had just completed a 111-day round-the-world cruise. Gluttons for leisure, I suppose.)

As we came to know our dinner partners, I was struck by how familiar the ship's combination of community and anonymity was. The situation seemed to reproduce the way many Americans interact with their neighbors at home. Bonds are easily formed but not intrusive, a positive spirit is encouraged, and the sense that everyone is likely to move on helps ease whatever tensions may arise. By design, it all had the feel of home.

I loved being out on the "ocean," and spent many hours sitting on the Promenade Deck "reading," which means dozing. Our itinerary took us to Curacao, Venezuela, Trinidad, Martinique, Saint Thomas, and a small island in the Bahamas owned by the cruise line. While Cooper busied himself taking notes and interviewing people, I was free to putter about and watch in amazement as the "nearly dead" scurried energetically from bingo game to bridge tournament to ice sculpting demonstration and more. My octogenarian shipmates set an intimidating pace. Almost every night a professional troupe of singers, dancers, comedians, and even a magician, put on a well-attended show. Our cruise director, "Frankie," unremittingly spurred on laggards. Oddly, there was also an art gallery on board as well as a saxophone autographed by Bill Clinton on display in a glass case. I ventured into the casino a few times but was driven out by the cigarette smoke and bad luck. Again, my more senior companions outlasted me at every turn.

Our brief stops on Caribbean islands were designed for only the most fleeting encounters with the local populace. Shopping was the real tourist attraction. I took a number of "cultural" tours that didn't amount to much beyond a peek at a cricket star's mansion or a visit to some municipal offices. Unforgettably, in Trinidad the Muzak consisted of Christmas songs set to a calypso beat, a dance performance gave new meaning to the phrase "cultural treasures," and a champion "steel pan" player offered us his rendition of Frank Sinatra's "My Way." Much, I was reminded, is lost in translation.

If not rested, I have returned from the Caribbean with a renewed respect for the energy and seaworthiness of America's senior citizens. Perhaps one day I will actually meet some people on Trinidad or Martinique, but not while cruising. □

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ONE JOURNALIST'S BEGINNINGS

Faith, family & race

Don Wycliff

I can as easily imagine myself not Catholic as I can imagine myself not black. Which is to say that I cannot imagine it at all.

I can't imagine *not* getting up on Sunday morning, going to my parish church, and sharing with my friends and neighbors there in the celebration of the Eucharist.

I can't imagine *not* having that mystical sense of connectedness with other Catholics all over the globe through the prayers and rituals and tradition and teaching of the church.

I can't imagine *not* thinking of life in terms of sin and grace and sacrifice and the cross and the resurrection.

I can't imagine *not* thinking of the pope as the head of my church, the vicar of Christ, the principal teacher and shepherd of the faithful.

Along with my race, my religion has always been a pillar of my identity in this life, in this society. These two facets of my identity account for the way I think about, feel about, and react to almost everything that I experience and observe.

Being Catholic and being black also account for my choice of journalism as a profession, because that dual identity has shaped the way I respond to injustice and it demands that I be involved in social action to right wrongs and redress inequities. Let me try to explain.

Knocking on the door

There is a room in my parents' house in Texas that several years ago I humorously took to calling "the colored museum." It is a veritable Wycliff family gallery. Photos cover almost every inch of wall space. The oldest picture, taken not many years after the Civil War, is of a woman ancestor three generations before my parents. The newest picture also is of a female, a member of the third generation after my parents.

It says something important about our family that, right along with the graduation photos and baby pictures and wedding and prom poses, my parents have hung the First Communion class pictures of eight of their nine children, me and my seven younger siblings. The only one missing is my older brother François's, and that's because, as best I can determine, it never existed. No picture was taken of him and his small class of First Communicants at Saint Joseph the Worker Church in Dayton, Texas.

The presence of those photos bespeaks the importance to my parents of their Catholic faith, and of our education and upbringing in it. But one particular aspect of those pictures makes that point with special force.

Take my picture, for example. It was shot on a sunny spring day in 1955, on the front steps of Holy Family Church in Ashland, Kentucky. There must have been at least fifty children in the class, girls and boys. But scan the faces and you'll see only one dark face among them: mine. The only other dark face in the photo is that of François, who, dressed in the cassock and surplice of an acolyte, stands to one side of the pastor, Monsignor Declan Carroll.

The other pictures show pretty much the same racial pattern, although there is at least a sprinkling of other African Americans in the classes of the youngest siblings. But when we washed up in Ashland, on the banks of the Ohio River east of Cincinnati, in autumn 1954, the Wycliffs were the only black family in the parish and we children were the only black kids in the school.

You'd have had a hard time convincing me of it at first, but we were blessed to be there. Holy Family, I later realized, was for us an ark, a refuge. My father, now eighty-three, related to me a few years ago how we came to be on

Don Wycliff, *a regular* Commonweal *contributor, is public editor of the* Chicago Tribune. *This essay is adapted from a presentation made for a conference on Catholics in the media sponsored by* Commonweal*'s Catholics in the Public Square project and funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts.*

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that ark. In one respect the story was very common to black people of that time; in another respect it was utterly uncommon.

Mother and Daddy both were born and raised in Dayton, a farming community in East Texas, almost exactly halfway between Houston and Beaumont on U.S. Highway 90. Daddy was an only child; Mother was the second oldest of ten. Daddy's mother, my grandmother, was a Baptist; his father, my grandfather, was a Catholic. Daddy was raised "basically Baptist" and converted to Catholicism after he and Mother were married. Mother's parents both were Catholics, with roots in those Creole communities of southern Louisiana.

(It has always baffled me to hear and see black Catholics referred to as unusual, because in my earliest years I was surrounded by black Catholics in Dayton and the other nearby communities. One of mother's aunts was a nun in the Sisters of the Holy Family, a black order in New Orleans. We were always ambivalent when Sister Ambrose came for one of her extended visits. On one hand, it meant that Mother would kill the fatted calf and we would eat exceptionally well. On the other, it meant our already overcrowded house would be even more crowded, as we made room for Sister Ambrose and whichever other nun accompanied her.)

My parents, Wilbert and Emily, were married on June 2, 1942 in Bisbee, Arizona, where Daddy, an Army lieutenant, was stationed at the time. François was born ten months later in March 1943. Daddy shipped out for Italy with the all-black 92nd Division not long afterwards.

After the war Daddy came home and, using his GI benefit, went part time to the Texas State University for Negroes (now Texas Southern University) in Houston while working at various jobs to support his family. He earned his degree in industrial education in 1950. For his trouble he got a series of jobs that gave him inadequate pay and even less dignity. It would never be otherwise in the segregated South, he realized, and so he resolved to leave.

His ticket out was a civil service exam that brought an offer of a job as an instructor of industrial arts at the Federal Correctional Institution—a federal prison—in Ashland, Kentucky. He went there alone in June 1954, to see whether he and the job and the people in charge would all find one another agreeable. They did, and in August 1954 the family packed up and moved north to join him. By then, he and Mother had five children—François, Don, Karen, Christopher, Ida—and a sixth, Joy, on the way.

Ashland was not exactly the racial Promised Land. In some respects it was worse than Dayton. We could not, for example, go to the downtown movie theaters at all in Ashland; we at least had been able to sit in the balcony in Dayton.

In one crucial respect, however, Ashland was an improvement: It had an alternative to the segregated black public school in the form of Holy Family School. Or at least it was a theoretical alternative, because to that date, no black child had ever gone to the Catholic school.

Daddy recalled to me how he visited the black public school, Booker T. Washington, saw the decrepit building and equipment, and was heartsick at the thought of sending his children there. Part of the purpose of our moving had been to get away from that sort of Jim Crow education.

It was his immediate supervisor at work, Walter Graybeal—a lapsed Catholic from Lafayette, Indiana; a white man who, Daddy swears, sacrificed his career advancement by routinely going to bat on Daddy's behalf—who first broached the idea of Holy Family as an alternative.

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"You're a Catholic, aren't you, Wyc?" Graybeal asked. "Well, why shouldn't your kids go to the Catholic school?"

Why not? Daddy went to the parish and talked with Father Carroll. As he related it to me, the priest told him, "Well, Mr. Wycliff, I don't see why your children can't go to school here. But let me ask the bishop."

A day or so later, Daddy got a call at work. It was Father Carroll. "The bishop said the Catholic schools are for *all* Catholic children," Father Carroll said. "Your children will be welcome here."

But that wasn't all of it. Father Carroll went the extra mile. On the Sunday before school was to start, he mounted the pulpit at Mass and laid down the law. One of Daddy's coworkers at the prison, Charles Eckenrode, who later became my confirmation sponsor, told him about it later. According to Eckenrode, Father Carroll announced that, starting that fall, there were going to be "colored children in our school. I want them treated properly. And anyone who doesn't will have to answer to me."

In those days, such words carried weight, coming from the Irish Catholic pastor of a largely Irish Catholic parish.

We were treated more than properly. I think it is fair to say that we were embraced as part of the Holy Family Parish family. To be sure, there was some nervousness at first. Mother tells of her anxiety in taking us to school on the first day—this was, after all, just months after the Supreme Court had overturned "separate but equal" public schooling in its now-celebrated *Brown* decision and the South, of which Kentucky was definitely a part, was full of talk of "massive resistance."

But there was no such resistance at Holy Family. There was, Mother says, a moment's hesitation and then another

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mother smiled, walked over to her and introduced herself and her daughter, who was the same age and had the same name as my sister Karen. The ice was broken. "You'll never know what a smile can mean to a person," Mother says as she recalls that day.

My subsequent Catholic education set me on a certain path. I did not plan to be a journalist. I was going to be a teacher—a professor of political science. I had graduated in June 1969 from the University of Notre Dame and been admitted to graduate study at the University of Chicago and given a fellowship to finance it.

It took me only a few weeks to realize that I did not want to be there. The University of Chicago was so thoroughly disconnected from the neighborhood, the city, and the social ferment surrounding it, it might as well have been on the moon. And the lively engagement with people and ideas and social movements that I had enjoyed at Notre Dame was absent in the intense, isolated atmosphere of graduate school at Chicago.

Still, while I didn't want to be doing what I was where I was, I had no idea what else I might want or be able to do—until December 4, 1969.

I awoke just before 7 A.M. in my studio apartment at 47th Street and Drexel Boulevard and flipped on the radio next to my bed. The all-news station crackled with word of a "shootout" overnight between units of the Chicago police assigned to the Cook County State's Attorney's office and members of the Black Panther Party on the city's West Side. Two Panther leaders, Fred Hampton and Marc Clark, had been killed in the exchange.

I had no relationship to the Black Panthers. I knew of Fred Hampton only what I had seen of him during brief television interviews in the weeks preceding his death. But his words and his manner in those TV appearances suggested to me that this was no mere street thug. Indeed, I saw something of myself in Hampton: We were both young black men full of passion to see our people's lot improved. He was trying to do it one way; I was trying another. His got him killed—unjustly, I was convinced.

In the days and weeks following the "shootout," the Panther story consumed me. I would get up in the morning, buy every newspaper I could find and devour the latest news. I watched every TV show I could. And I listened to the radio constantly for news.

Gradually, the Chicago news media unearthed and exposed the truth. There had been no shoot*out*; it had been a shoot-*in* by the police. Hampton and Clark had been deliberately targeted and slain.

As I watched the Chicago media do their splendid work, I began to feel myself attracted to that work as a socially relevant and useful way to spend a life. It was in every sense of the word a genuine *calling*, a discovery of a *vocation*.

It wasn't until the end of the spring quarter at the University of Chicago that I got up the gumption to strike out

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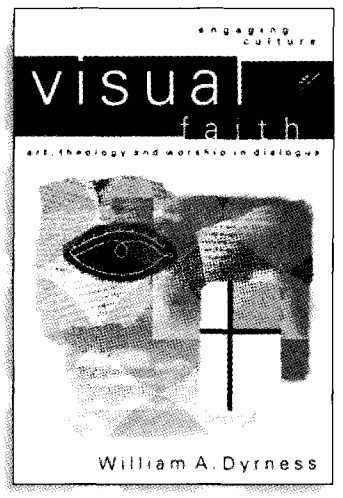

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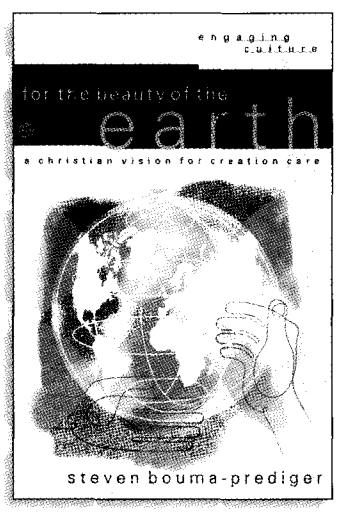

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To My Daughter

When it comes time
let all the words be spoken
that must be
so that I may take your voice with me
for the next ten billion centuries
mine will be with you
like a packet of letters
handwritten over the years
to unfold anytime
read
hear me speak
in the voice that used to put you to bed
telling the story of all our days
fingered in the retelling
like pages of your books
the best parts dog-eared
pressed smooth by thumbprints
and the refrain of all our nights
as you slipped away:
I loved you before dinosaurs
even before the stars

Joan I. Siegel

in a new direction. I packed up my books and my meager other belongings and headed home to Texas, to Houston. I hoped to get into TV news, but had no luck at the stations there.

I finally made my way to the spanking new offices of the *Houston Post* and filled out a job application, telling the lady in the personnel office that I wanted to be a reporter. I should have been surprised when they agreed to give me an interview—nobody walks into a big-city newspaper off the street and gets an interview, much less a job. But I suppose the educational pedigree helped. So also did the fact that, at that time, there was all of one black reporter in the *Post* newsroom and there was unease in the city over a Black Panther-type group that called itself Peoples Party II.

Anyway, I was interviewed and hired. The passion for justice and righteousness cultivated by my parents and teachers had led me to my profession.

I am blessed to have had a career of (so far) thirty years in the news industry. The last sixteen of those have been in the most rarified part of the industry: opinion writing. I wrote editorials for more than five years at the *New York Times*. I did the same for ten years at the *Chicago Tribune*, and for nine of those years I served as editorial page editor. For the last year, I have written a column of personal opinion, mainly about issues of media process and ethics, but often about other matters as well.

The stock in trade of opinion writers is ideas—ideas that challenge, provoke, clarify. The Catholic Church, with possibly the oldest and richest intellectual history in the Western world, ought to be a powerful contender for the time and attention of columnists and editorial writers at the nation's newspapers. In my experience, however, it is not. The reasons are complex.

There is an enormous amount of anti-Catholic sentiment in newsrooms, as there is in the society at large. Some of it is plain old lowbrow bigotry—I've heard Catholics referred to on more than one occasion as "mackerel-snappers." Some is more sophisticated, holding the pope responsible for famine and starvation because of the church's official opposition to artificial birth control and abortion. And some is visceral, stemming from the conviction that the church has over the centuries fostered or tolerated anti-Semitism and various other kinds of bigotry and intolerance and therefore is not to be trusted.

But in my opinion anti-Catholicism is a small obstacle compared with the ones that grow out of the Catholic Church itself.

At the most basic level, Catholicism suffers from the same disability in attempting to influence the news media as it suffers from in its pulpits on Sunday mornings: bad preaching. The church simply does not have many spokespersons—any spokesperson?—who can articulate its message in a way that makes it relevant and understandable to modern men and women of a secularist bent. Add to this the fact that the church's message is fundamentally a countercultural one, and thus a demanding one, and the problem of making the message understood is compounded.

Additionally—and this will not be much appreciated by Catholic liberals—the Catholic Church in America has become a Tower of Babel. Non-Catholics—and many Catholics as well—have become confused because there is no Catholic trademark to distinguish one so-called Catholic opinion from another. The brand name "Catholic" has been devalued in the marketplace through confusion. Catholics for a Free Choice is the same as any other Catholic group or opinion—or at least that's what that Catholic historian or theologian on CNN or ABC or in the *New York Times* said.

Frankly, attempting to bring what little I know of that distinguished Catholic intellectual tradition to bear on deliberations in the newsroom or the editorial boardroom usually gives me fits. Not only am I unable to speak authoritatively about Catholic positions, I am unable to *feel* authoritative.

So what do I do? I try to go with the basics. I read a lot of Scripture and try to apply what I read to the situations that present themselves in the news. Interestingly, the older I get the more I find myself attracted to the passages about forgiveness and reconciliation.

But always, always, the most powerful passage of all is Matthew 25: 31–46. Especially, verse 40: "I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me." □

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THIS TOO SHALL PASS

Why Ex corde's *mandate won't last*

Peter C. Phan

In the guidelines for the implementation of *Ex corde ecclesiae* adopted by the bishops last June, the *mandatum*, or mandate, theologians must seek from their local bishop is said to be "an acknowledgment by church authority that a Catholic professor of a theological discipline is teaching within the full communion of the Catholic church." It is not, the guidelines go on, "an appointment, authorization, delegation, or approbation of one's teaching by church authorities." The mandate requires the professor to "teach authentic Catholic doctrine and to refrain from putting forth as Catholic teaching anything contrary to the church's magisterium."

The mandate is considered a "juridical" instrument, although the irony of such a canonical regulation being couched in such irremediably ambiguous language should be lost on no one. How can the bishop, whose serious moral obligation is to grant or refuse the mandate, determine with certainty the "fullness" of the professor's communion with the church? How much communion is deemed "full" communion? If the requirement of the mandate is a matter of theological, moral, and canonical importance, should the bishop simply "presume" such a full communion on the part of any theologian, as the guidelines recommend that he should? Does "teaching" rule out critical evaluation that includes pointing out, in an informed and reasoned way, the weaknesses and even wrongness of certain "authentic Catholic doctrine"? What is covered under "anything contrary to the church's magisterium"? Has not the magisterium taught doctrinal and moral errors in the past? Is not the possibility of error implied in the technical term "authentic teaching"?

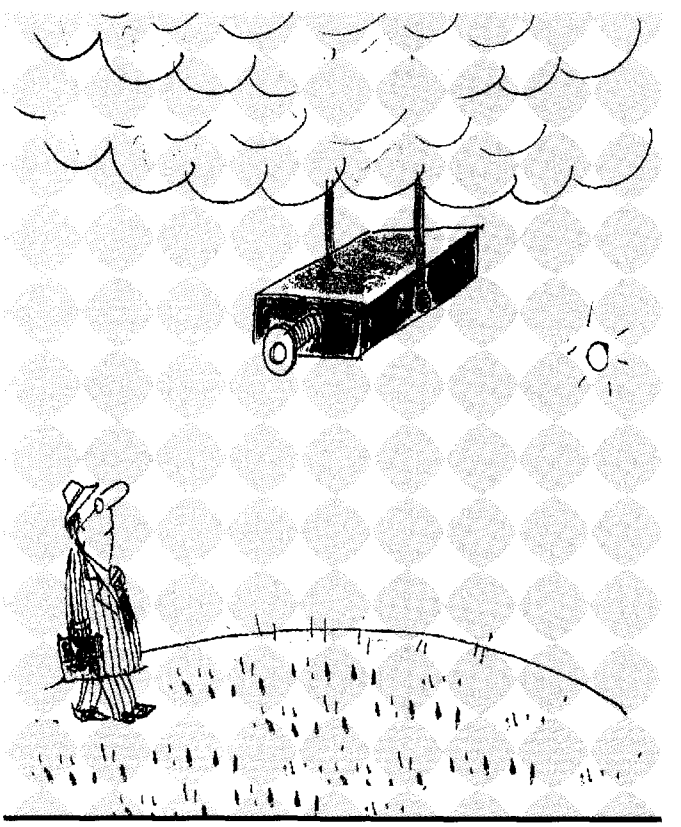
If so, how can these errors be corrected if theologians are barred from showing that a certain teaching of the magisterium is not "Catholic teaching" as it is claimed to be? More practically, is an average American bishop intellectually competent to assess the orthodoxy of a theologian's writings?

Given these ambiguities, no wonder there are theologians, though committed to "full communion with the church," who will not apply for the mandate or will refuse it when granted *motu proprio* (on his own initiative) by the bishop.

(I leave aside other weighty reasons for not seeking the mandate, such as the possible loss of civil rights, the protection of academic freedom, the credibility of Catholic theology, and the well-being of the church.)

To gauge the possible impact of the mandate, it might be helpful to recall the history of another juridical requirement, namely, that of the oath against the Chinese Rites. Pope Benedict XIV's constitution *Ex quo singulari* (July 5, 1742) forbade the observance of various rites connected with the cult of Confucius and the veneration of ancestors, and reinstituted the requirement of an oath against such rites for all missionaries to the East. To underline the seriousness of this oath, Benedict commanded that "each and everything" in his constitution "be observed exactly, integrally, absolutely, inviolably, and unchangeably...under pain of automatic excommunication":

> God forbid that a religious missionary of any order, congregation, institute, and society—even the Society



Peter C. Phan *is the Warren-Blanding Professor of Religion and Culture in the Department of Religion and Religious Education at The Catholic University of America, and president of the Catholic Theological Society of America.*

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Or to Put It Another Way

She is following the voices
as I once followed a car in darkness
ahead of me, the tail lights
like two pieces of red fire
smeared on my windshield
by rain. I didn't know
what I wanted or why,
but I was resolute,
steering through dangerous curves,
swaying like a bundle,
mad with the need
to catch someone
I thought I knew.

Or to put it another way,
she is like the terrified fawn, head
up, standing between the barbed wire
and my car, its nose sniffing
violently to catch the scent
of its mother who
fled when she
heard the horn, its ears
alert as two little sound dishes
to catch any twitch in
the long tan weeds. What I mean,
my mother is leaving us,
she has already forgotten us,
concentrating on the voices,

because it takes concentration
to die properly, to find
some way to enter
all that terrible glory.

Jeanne Murray Walker

> of Jesus—refuse to obey those things which We lay down and command by the text of this Constitution, exactly, integrally, absolutely, inviolably, and strictly. If anyone does refuse, in virtue of holy obedience we expressly order his superiors, both provincial and general, to unhesitatingly remove such men—stubborn, sinful, and disobedient—from the missions. They should immediately recall them to Europe. They should report them to Us, so that we can punish the guilty according to the gravity of their offence.

To certify the perpetual validity of his decree, Benedict added: "We want this Constitution of Ours to remain in force, all of it lasting for all time to come." Of course, he did not foresee that "lasting for all time to come" came to an end on December 8, 1939, when a lowly instruction of *Propaganda Fide, Plane compertum est*, permitted, with Pius XII's approval, what Benedict had forbidden, and abolished the obligation of the oath.

There have been instances in church history where church authoritative teachings and disciplinary measures, often accompanied by threats of excommunication, were reversed. These include magisterial teachings on slavery, usury, religious freedom, and the compulsory use of Latin in the teaching of the sacred sciences in the past, and now on capital punishment. There are, however, three similarities between the Chinese Rites Controversy and the mandate requirement that invite thoughtful reflection.

Canonically, *Ex corde*'s mandate pales in comparison with the oath issued by Benedict. Individual professors alone, and no other official of the university or religious superior, are bound by the mandate. No canonical or civil penalties, much less automatic excommunication, are attached to its violation. And, of course, there is no quasi-infallible, threatening, and demeaning language in the *Ex corde* guidelines. However, there are three instructive similarities between the mandate and the oath against the Chinese Rites. First, both were instituted without any dialogue or consultation with the people most directly concerned. The Chinese Christians, who were deeply affected by the Roman teaching and policies, were never consulted. Likewise, the mandate was approved by the American bishops without any consultation with theologians; only at the last minute, and only at the request of the theological learned societies, did the bishops "listen" to the theologians' concerns.

Second, both the oath and the mandate betray a monumental failure on the part of church authorities to understand and respect local customs and practices. In the Chinese Rites controversy, the cult of Confucius and the veneration of ancestors were presented in Western theological categories of "temple," "sacrifice," "altar," "adoration," "petitionary prayer," etc., and condemned as "superstitious" *tout court*. Similarly, the mandate is an attempt to use a legal instrument to assure orthodoxy throughout the world without due respect for longstanding academic traditions of various countries. In the last analysis, both measures suffer from a seriously defective theology of the local church and the church as *communio*.

Third, both the oath and the mandate are handicapped by a constricted vision. In the rites controversy a constricted vision of mission was at work; in *Ex corde* a parochial conception of what is educationally at stake dominates. In the eighteenth century the goal of mission was seen primarily as conversion from idolatry and religious perversion. Mission was not understood, as it is today, to consist in bearing witness to the reign of God through a respectful dialogue with local cultures, religions, and the poor. Similarly, the "Catholic identity" of colleges and universities is seen to reside primarily in the department of theology, and more precisely, in the possession of the mandate by its Catholic professors. But, as anyone with a nodding acquaintance with

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colleges and universities can attest, the theology faculty is far from the most influential department. Rather, it is the law, business, engineering, and medical schools as well as the natural science departments that wield the most power, enjoy the fattest budgets, and whose graduates will exercise the largest influence on society. It is very easy for these disciplines to ignore the "Catholic identity" of their institutions. If bishops are serious about preserving that identity, they should take on the "big guys," a task far more challenging than going after theologians.

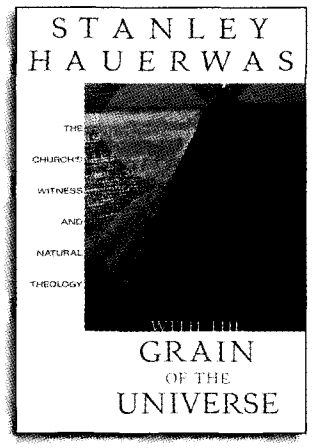
If Pope Benedict XIV's prohibitions concerning the Chinese Rites were eventually reversed, there is no reason why a toothless law such as the mandate requirement will not meet the same fate, and much sooner. Here again, there may be a deep similarity between the oath and the mandate. Reversal was not brought about by the profound wisdom of ecclesiastical hierarchs or the brilliant insights of theologians (who were strictly forbidden to write about the controversy). Rather, it was occasioned by external events, namely, the difficulties that followed the refusal of some Catholic students of Sophia University in Tokyo to pay homage to the war dead during their visit to a Shinto shrine on May 5, 1932, and the decision of the Japanese Kwangtung army to make Confucianism the *Wangtao* (The Way of the Benevolent Ruler) for all the peoples (therefore also for Catholics) of their puppet state of Manchukuo. The fact that Japan was a rising economic and political power was no small incentive for the Vatican to discreetly shelve Pope Benedict's edict.

Similarly, it is doubtful that the mandate will be reversed because of the courageous posture of the American bishops vis-à-vis Rome or by the persuasiveness of a theological argument. If it is reversed, it will likely happen because of purely external factors such as loss of federal and state funding, expensive lawsuits against the bishops and the colleges and universities, bad publicity, difficulties in hiring new faculty, and the destruction of the lives of theologians, especially the lay ones. Unfortunately, these harmful things are not hypothetical scenarios. They are very real probabilities.

It is widely acknowledged that Rome's position on the Chinese Rites wreaked havoc with missionary work in Asia. Indeed, the church has yet to recover fully from the damage. Rome's actions created untold suffering for Asians who had to betray their ancestors and their cultural heritage in order to be Christian. It is imperative that the mandate not be allowed to do similar damage to our universities and colleges. School presidents and boards of trustees must not allow the mandate to be written into the statutes of their institutions.

Regardless of their views on the mandate, a sense of professional solidarity is imperative for theologians. Those who apply for the mandate are not necessarily right-wing and narrow-minded or orthodox and faithful to the church, nor are those who refuse it "stubborn, sinful, and disobedient" or left-wing and broad-minded. As history warns us, not all the juridical actions of the magisterium are efficacious, let alone infallible. □

Groundbreaking Theology



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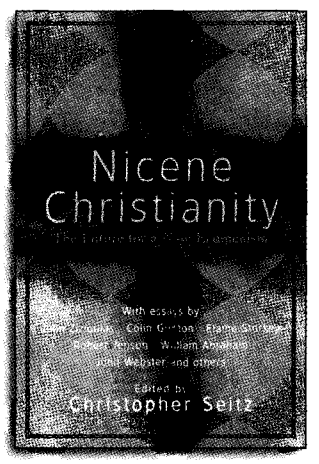

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Contributors include Robert Jenson, John Webster, Vigen Guroian, and Ephraim Radner.

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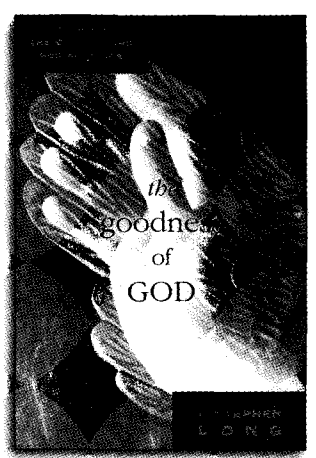

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Rand Richards Cooper

REALLY BIG IDEAS

'Waking Life'

Writer-director Richard Linklater created a name for himself with 1991's independent-film cult hit, *Slacker*. *Slacker* toured Linklater's hometown of Austin, Texas, capturing the rants and rambles of emblematic college-town figures—coffeehouse anarchists and video junkies, conspiracy theorists, punks and street people, and assorted kooks, like the woman who sells Pap smears of Madonna, or the guy who claims that TV's Smurfs were actually preparing America's children for the coming of Krishna. Praised for flaky originality and a directorial style that won comparison to the later films of Buñuel, *Slacker* caught the *Weltanschauung* of twentysomething naysayers who turned lethargy into a philosophy, conflating squalor and spirituality while announcing the latest American withdrawal from the rat race with a slacker's pledge of holy failure: "I may live badly, but at least I don't have to work for it."

Linklater's current film, *Waking Life*, is another series of encounters with intellectuals and pseudo-intellectuals— passionate eccentrics intoxicated with their own talk (some are played by actors, but most are real), theorizing about human consciousness and the meaning of life. The plot, such as it is, follows an unnamed student-protagonist, played by Wiley Wiggins (he was the boy in Linklater's 1993 *Dazed and Confused*), who wanders through random encounters with people spouting off about God, man, and the universe, then trudges back to his apartment to relax in front of late-night TV—

Re-animated life

only to encounter still more about God, man, and the universe. He also has a habit of levitating from his bed and floating over the city. We're led to believe this is all either a dream from which Wiggins can't wake up— or possibly a last, slippery, extended moment of consciousness between a car accident and death.

Waking Life has won praise across the spectrum, from Roger Ebert ("exhilarating...a cold shower of bracing, clarifying ideas") to the *New Yorker*'s David Denby ("a revolutionary and beautiful movie"). Much of the excitement centers on the film's technological innovation. Linklater shot *Waking Life* on video, then hired a team of thirty animators to go to work on it, using specially developed software that let them digitally paint each frame. The result is a world constantly in motion, both the background of buildings and trees, and people themselves, all gently oscillating, pulsing, and vibrating. *Waking Life* looks like a parody of handheld-camera shakiness or drugged-out perception (at a film festival screening, Linklater especially welcomed audience members who were high). It combines the feel of a documentary with the cartoon look of a graphic novel, and a soundtrack featuring a lovely contemporary cello theme, at once dreamy, urgent, and faintly playful.

"Mostly it's just people going off on whatever," Wiggins says, describing his experiences. "You know, really intensely." Our protagonist listens and listens. He listens to a professor lecture on existentialism, complaining about postmodernism's view of the human being as a social construction. He listens to a linguist discoursing on the inexpressible, and an evolutionary biologist on "the telescoping nature of evolutionary power"; to a philosopher citing Augustine and Aquinas on free will, a literary theorist on "the radical subjectivity... that opens the mind to a vast objectivity," an intense, bug-eyed film director on Bazin's ontology of film, and a self-described dream junkie—an "oneiranaut"—avidly describing how REM sleep effects serotonin.

Waking Life is a Great Ideas funhouse, tilty and disorienting. Linklater's intellectuals are really two kinds: professionals,

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the producers who riff effortlessly, if sometimes eccentrically, on their subjects; and amateurs, the consumers who try—often feebly— to hum the melodies later on. The film is full of the fuzzy and precious secondhand intellectuality of people whose café conversations begin with, "You know that thing Benedict Anderson says about identity?" and who ransack pop science in search of hip metaphors for creativity, consciousness, and above all, the nature of the self. "Our cells are completely regenerating every seven years," goes another café conversation. "We've already become different people several times over—yet we remain quintessentially ourselves."

It all raises the question, is Linklater satirizing or celebrating? His cartoonists play wittily with his subjects' philosophical tirades: one character speculates on free will and quantum mechanics, saying, "I'd rather be a gear in a big deterministic machine than just some random swerving"—and his head turns into a huge gear; another pontificates excitedly on the evolution of an information-age "neo-human, with a new consciousness...no longer restricted by time and space"—and his cranium swells monstrously, as if about to explode. The visual jokes suggest the wandering thoughts of a listener wilting under the onslaught, but they make it hard to read Linklater's intentions. For instance, at one point we follow a political activist driving through the city, broadcasting a loudspeaker rant against "the corporate slave state"—his face turning red, then purple, then gray, as he cries to the heavens about "the dynamic human spirit that REFUSES TO SUBMIT!" Is Linklater mocking him? Is he mocking an embittered young man who babbles on—in pro forma protest boilerplate—about political disenfranchisement, then pours gasoline over himself and calmly lights a match? Linklater remains as inscrutable as his protagonist, preferring to listen, and it's hard to tell whether he admires his interlocutors' incessant profundity or is gently prodding it.

As *Waking Life* rambles on, its metaphysical preoccupations gather an accumulating weight of the absurd. Characters pass by, muttering cryptic utterances like "Kierkegaard's last words were 'sweep me up.'" TV talking heads drone on about "the relationships of my various selves to one another." The street philosopher Speed Levitch (the manic New York City bus guide seen in Bennett Miller's 1998 documentary, *The Cruise*) quotes Spanish poet Garcia Lorca citing Dostoyevsky on alienation, and falls swooning into metaphysical exaltation: "I can learn to love, and make love to, the paradoxes that surround me," he proclaims, "and on a really romantic evening of self, I go salsa dancing with my confusion." Linklater clearly enjoys this rapture, seeing it as inspired madness; and a film-ending cameo by the director himself, standing at a pinball machine and delivering a New Agey exhortation on the Eternal Present, confirms that his stance toward his subjects is finally one of sympathy, not satire.

Waking Life is a strange mix of light and heavy—it floats you off in a dream, then buries you beneath a mountain of talk. After a while you begin to wish Linklater had found a way to dramatize his themes rather than talking them; and neither the jittery, morphing facial studies nor the dreamy floating landscapes can relieve the sense that the film isn't going anywhere. Ultimately, the movie bogs down not merely in the quantity of its talk, but the gooeyness of its self-absorption. "You haven't met yourself yet," another passing stranger counsels Wiggins, "but in the meantime, the advantage of meeting others is that one of them might show you your self." Those who find *Waking Life* hard to take may insist on the obverse, namely, that the advantage of meeting others lies precisely in their being "other," in showing you things that are *not* you. And indeed, the few times *Waking Life* jumps the tracks of the self and lands in some mundane reality or other, I felt gratitude, relief, and an intense desire for more.

"The meaning of life," the late poet James Merrill wrote, "is that it should mean." But poets understand something certain kinds of intellectuals don't, namely, that it does so less effectively through the discourse on meaning than through the particulars of the world: its trivial walks and talks, your child falling asleep on your lap, the pleasure of fixing your car's engine or paying your bills; the red wheelbarrow glazed with rainwater, on which, as William Carlos Williams knew, so much depends. *Waking Life* commits us to spending two hours with people who struggle so hard for the meaning of life they can hardly live. Some will find this metaphysical feast exhilarating; but I found myself wanting a good deal more—or less. □

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Celia Wren

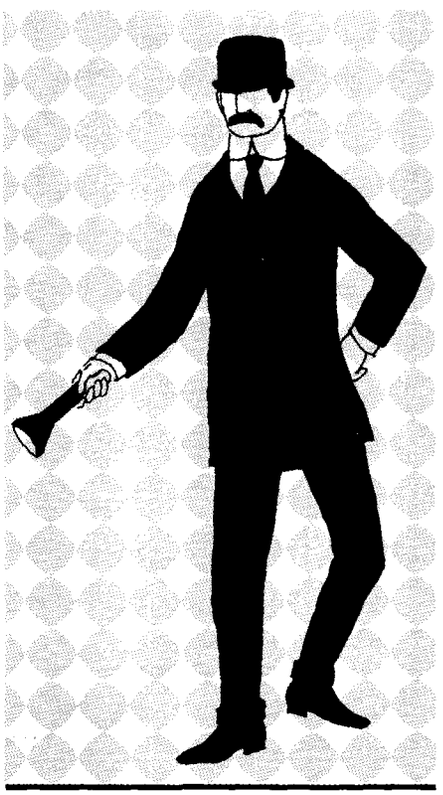
SHERLOCKIAN APOCRYPHA

From Jack the Ripper to Fu Manchu

Carole Nelson Douglas's latest mystery novel, *Chapel Noir*, involves a Rothschild baron, Jack the Ripper, a tarot-telling gypsy, Buffalo Bill, and a warren of catacombs beneath the Eiffel Tower. Quotes from Verlaine and Shakespeare feature among the chapter epigraphs, and the concluding bibliography cites Krafft-Ebing and *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris*. But for a small subset of detective-story addicts, the book's point of salient interest is its adherence to an obscure literary category: the Sherlock Holmes pastiche. Several times over the course of 475 pages, the immortal sleuth stalks into the narrative and matches wits with the cigar-smoking protagonist, Irene Adler—a character Douglas has borrowed from Arthur Conan Doyle's 1891 story, "A Scandal in Bohemia."

When she launched her Irene Adler series in 1990 with *Goodnight, Mr. Holmes*, Douglas joined the ranks of writers, filmmakers, and playwrights who have indulged in Holmes apocrypha—a lineage that includes Arthur's son, Adrian Conan Doyle, who cobbled together *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes*, in collaboration with the writer John Dickson Carr, in the early 1950s. Carr and Doyle *fils* harbored modest ambitions: generating stories for the episodes tantalizingly referred to, but never described, in the oeuvre of Doyle *père*—the "Camberwell poisoning case" that Watson alludes to in the story titled "The Five Orange Pips," for example. Since *The Exploits*, dozens of artists have haunted the terrain around 221B Baker Street, often attracting little interest outside the circles of hard-core Sherlockians. One notable exception is Nicholas Meyer's 1974 bestseller *The Seven-Percent Solution*, in which Sigmund Freud cures Holmes's cocaine addiction; in 1976 the book spawned a movie that featured Alan Arkin, Vanessa Redgrave, and Laurence Olivier. Other cinematic contributions to the Holmes legend—for example, *Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror* (1942), which transported its eponymous hero to the World War II era—have also reached a wide audience.

But the genre extends far beyond Meyer and the movies, as I can attest, having built up a substantial collection of Holmes pastiches, in one of my more eccentric hobbies. Tired of rereading *The Hound of the Baskervilles*? Your options range in style and scope from Jô Soares's *A Samba for Sherlock*, set in 1886 Rio de Janeiro, to Frank Thomas's *Sherlock Holmes and the Sacred Sword*, which transports the detective to Egypt's Valley of the Kings; from the science fiction anthology *Sherlock Holmes in Orbit* to Sena Jeter Naslund's *Sherlock in Love*, weighed down by literary aspirations, to *Resurrected Holmes*, whose contributors imagine Holmes tales as penned by Ernest Hemingway, Jack Kerouac, and P. G. Wodehouse. Among the odder ersatz Doyles on my shelf are Randall Collins's *The Case of the Philosophers' Ring*, which throws Holmes together with Bertrand Russell, John Maynard Keynes, Lytton Strachey, and other Bloomsbury-type highbrows ("Observe, Watson...It may be that there are persons who do not wish Wittgenstein's ideas to be published at all...") and *Sherlock Holmes, Bridge Detective*, by George Gooden and Frank Thomas ("Watson, my mind has been titillated by that spade slam skurry bid...").



Blame it all on the marketplace. The appetite for Holmes stories has always been insatiable, as Arthur Conan Doyle discovered when an outraged public forced him to revive the character after pitching him over the Reichenbach Falls in the 1893 story "The Final Problem." The man with the deerstalker is more reassuring than most detectives, for he represents pure rationality, perpetually unswayed by sexual desire and immune to the petty curiosities and solipsism that plague the rest of us—a fact demonstrated in the passage in Doyle's "A Study in Scarlet" that relates the sleuth's indifference to the fact that the earth revolves around the sun. And yet, with his passion for music and loyalty to Watson, he is no mere pedant but a "romantic personality possessed by the scientific spirit," in Edmund Wilson's words. To call him a role model is an understatement; the writer and minister Stephen Kendrick hardly goes too far when he argues, in *Holy Clues: The Gospel according to Sherlock Holmes*, that Holmes's "devotion to the truth...elevates him to being a new kind of monk who offers his life for others."

So it's not surprising that writers of pastiches—works that have been almost wholly ignored by the legions of Holmes-fixated critics—have wistfully imagined Baker Street's *éminence gris* solving the great crimes of history. In addition to Carole Nelson Douglas, the mystery writer Michael Dibdin and the broadcast journalist Edward B. Hanna have permitted the detective to track down Jack the Ripper.

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Other puzzles of yesteryear deciphered by the Victorian investigator include the Dreyfus affair, the 1907 theft of the Irish crown jewels, the alleged bigamy of King George V, an 1880 rumor about the death of Rutherford B. Hayes, and the sinking of the *Titanic*. Were time more elastic, one can imagine how it would soothe the U.S. national psyche to have Moriarty's arch-enemy get to the bottom of the Lindbergh baby kidnapping, the O.J. Simpson case, and just who *really* won the presidential election of 2000.

In many cases, though, Doyle imitators have introduced fictional mysteries, but peopled them with actual historical personages. Meyer, for example, followed up *The Seven-Percent Solution* with the less successful *The West End Horror*, whose characters include Oscar Wilde, Gilbert and Sullivan, and George Bernard Shaw. And one highlight of my pastiche collection is Alexis Lecaye's *Einstein et Sherlock Holmes*, which to my knowledge has never been translated into English. In an essay with the intimidating title "The Representation of Victorian England in the Contemporary Detective Novel," the academic Anthony Giffone argues that whodunit authors like Meyer (and, he might have added, Caleb Carr) use historical figures to "give a pop-culture genre a serious veneer, a sense of not being a mere entertainment."

But in the case of Sherlockian apocrypha, I would argue, a different game is afoot. The Case of the Appropriated Historical Figure parallels the Case of the Appropriated Fictional Figure—a phenomenon almost equally prevalent in the pastiches. In the volumes in my collection, Holmes battles Dracula, solves Dickens's *Mystery of Edwin Drood*, hobnobs with Hercule Poirot, Father Brown, and Porfiry Petrovitch (from *Crime and Punishment*), meets the Phantom of the Opera, and (my favorite) crosses wits with Fu Manchu. The crucial point here is not that the borrowed material redeems the mystery, but that in some sense the mystery redeems the borrowed material. To place the odds and ends of history and literature within the purview of Sherlock Holmes, the great rationalist and seeker after truth, is to rescue them from confusion and meaninglessness, to fashion a comforting continuity.

It has become a truism to observe that culture is becoming fragmented—that ever-multiplying, demographically targeted TV channels and custom-tailored Internet news services are chipping away at group identity and shared values. By taking Sherlock Holmes in hand again and again, Carole Nelson Douglas & Co. seem to express a yearning for reality's glut of narratives to be folded into a single narrative with a single, comforting significance—Sherlock Holmes solves life. When you get right down to it, it's not unlike the wish that Tennyson broached in *In Memoriam*, a poem that—like early detective novels—offered a response to Darwinism and other faith-shaking scientific advances: "O, yet we trust that somehow good / Will be the final goal of ill...That nothing walks with aimless feet; / That not one life shall be destroyed, / Or cast as rubbish to the void, / When God hath made the pile complete." □

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Benjamin Ivry

CLASSICAL DILEMMA

Paying for that symphony orchestra

A stagnant U.S. economy and complex world events have cast a shadow over North America's orchestral landscape. In California, the San Jose Symphony, with a $2.5 million deficit and declining attendance after 123 years of performances, has gone out of business. The orchestra had been counting on 60 percent of its $8 million annual budget from contributions and 40 percent from ticket sales, expectations that were cruelly disappointed. The *San Jose Mercury News* noted mournfully that the local symphony was "older than all the other arts groups in the city, not to mention most of the buildings. It has been and should be an important part of the community's cultural life. But age and tradition alone can't guarantee its survival." The Saint Louis and Toronto symphonies are also deeply in debt, and even the mighty Chicago Symphony is in trouble, canceling its twenty-seven-year series of weekly nationally syndicated radio broadcasts—the last remaining U.S. orchestra to be heard on the radio fifty-two weeks a year. David Levin, vice president of WFMT Radio Networks, stated that the terrorist bombings only "compounded the difficulty" of securing funding for U.S. orchestras' concert broadcasts.

New York's Carnegie Hall has delayed by a year the opening of a new underground 650-seat concert space, "when it is hoped that the city's economic climate will be more receptive to it," Robert Harth, the hall's artistic director, told the *New York Times*. "The landscape has changed significantly since September 11," Harth said, "and the issue of ticket sales in the current economic climate is a significant consideration for all arts organizations right now."

Harth's views are backed up by other examples. In Canada, the Toronto Symphony, the Calgary Philharmonic, and Symphony New Brunswick have similar woes. *Business Week* recently headlined a story, "For the Arts, the Party Is Over." The article observed that in the best of times, orchestras must scramble for donations, but that so many valid and urgent charities are competing nowadays for dollars in a discouraging economy music must inevitably suffer.

But is the party really over? The American Symphony Orchestra League, a New York based collective that includes almost all U.S. groups, says in fact orchestral concert attendance has increased by 3 percent from 1995 to 2000, to around 32 million people. The percentage of orchestras with financial deficits declined from 49 percent in 1990–91 to 29 percent in 1999–2000.

The average age of subscribers to orchestral seasons has remained constant for many years, between fifty-two and fifty-five, belying the notion that classical music fans are an aging bunch. Indeed, as life expectancies have increased, people who start subscribing to classical series in middle age can be counted on to retain their subscriptions for longer than ever before.

"And now, something unforgettable."

The fact is, orchestras, like all arts institutions, have their ups and downs that are closely tied to the economy. At a time when even MTV is downsizing, it is hardly surprising that some orchestras are suffering. They live not just on ticket sales and donations, but also on the income from their endowments, which common wisdom states should be three to four times an orchestra's annual budget. The San Jose Symphony, with a $7.8 million budget and only a $1 million endowment, had been living on borrowed time. The Saint Louis Symphony has a current annual budget of nearly $26 million and an endowment of only $27 million. That's a recipe for trouble, if not imminent disaster. However, the Dallas Symphony Orchestra has a $22.5 million budget and an endowment of more than $65 million, meaning that it will not be featured in the kind of gloom-and-doom, death-of-the-symphony articles that media mavens find so easy to write these days. Another Texan ensemble, the Fort Worth Symphony, with a $9.9 million budget, is well on the way to raising an endowment of $30 million, which is more good news generally overlooked.

As America fights a war against terrorism that will take years to resolve, we should not forget that one of the goals we are fighting for is the kind of free expression of culture that a symphony orchestra exemplifies. *Time* magazine called Taliban-controlled Afghanistan a "rhythmless nation," pointing out that the Taliban Ministry for the Prevention of Vice and Promotion of Virtue banned people from listening to or playing music, "lest molten lead be poured into their ears on Judgment Day." America's orchestral landscape has rarely been more exciting, with the splendidly gifted conductor Christoph Eschenbach taking over at the helm of the Philadelphia Orchestra, the promising young maestro Frans Welser-Most assuming leadership of the Cleveland Orchestra, and other appointments that promise dynamic change and development. Now is certainly not the time to play into the hands of Cassandras who fill our media with the molten lead of cultural defeatism. □

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God apologizes

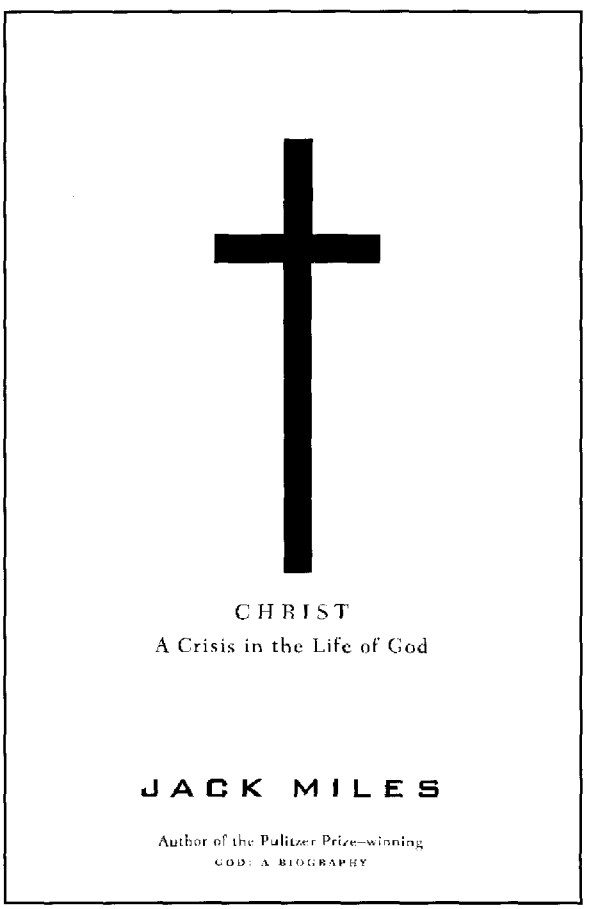
Christ
A Crisis in the Life of God
Jack Miles
Alfred A. Knopf, $26.95, 352 pp.

Daniel M. Murtaugh

In this meditation on the New Testament, Jack Miles builds on the project of *God: A Biography*, his Pulitzer Prize–winning study of the Old Testament (more specifically of the Jewish Bible or *Tanakh*). Because Miles's method is deliberately literary rather than theological or historical, it will help to define these three approaches.

The theological approach insists, in its way, on the unity of what Miles calls the Christian Bible, that is, Old and New Testaments. Theologically, the Bible is seen as the expression of an internally consistent account of God's relationship to humans and to the rest of creation. However, the Bible is primarily narrative while the theological account of it is doctrinal and discursive, something forged in the acrimonious debates of the great councils of the first Christian centuries. This incongruity gives rise to embarrassments. Doctrines prize stability while stories consist of change through time. In Old Testament stories, Yahweh changes his mind and repents past acts. In the New Testament, Jesus grows in wisdom and strength. In Christian doctrine, on the other hand, God is eternal and unchanging, and his every potential is always already fulfilled.

Medieval theology responded to this discrepancy by drawing upon procedures already present in the Gospels and the epistles attributed to Paul. Typology, one version of "the fulfillment of the Scriptures," mapped the time of biblical narrative into a mental space of alignments between the Old Testament and the New. The Old Testament did not develop into the New Testament in this view. Instead , it *meant* the New Testament. For example, the Old Testament Book of Exodus records the liberation of the children of Israel from Egypt. Without compromising its historical authenticity, the medieval exegete said that this event was also a foreshadowing (a "type" or "figure") of the Incarnation and Redemption. This was the reason it happened, to reveal in advance the defining event of the New Testament, like a mirror catching its light even before the light was kindled. In the light of the New Testament, Saint Augustine counseled, we were to read every discordant element in the Old Testament in a way that turned it into this kind of anticipatory metaphor for the charity embodied by God incarnate in Christ. So Leah and Rachel, the wives of a disturbingly bigamous Jacob, prefigure Martha and Mary, who ministered to Jesus and became in turn figures for the active and contemplative lives of Christians to this day.



The historical approach, begun in the Enlightenment and flourishing in the nineteenth century, dissolved this theological unity. Its philological sophistication revealed multiple authors and traditions beneath the eddies of inconsistency on the textual surface. Its search for the historical truth behind the rhetoric and myth of the text analyzed that text into a jumble of incoherent fragments. Yet when that search was done, the historical truth was still elusive. For a recent episode in this frustrating struggle, see Luke Timothy Johnson's review of *A Marginal Jew* by John Meier in the November 9 issue of *Commonweal*.

Miles's literary approach, here and in *God: A Biography*, finds in the Bible a unity (*pace* the historicists) that is essentially narrative (*pace* the theologians). This means that he views God as a

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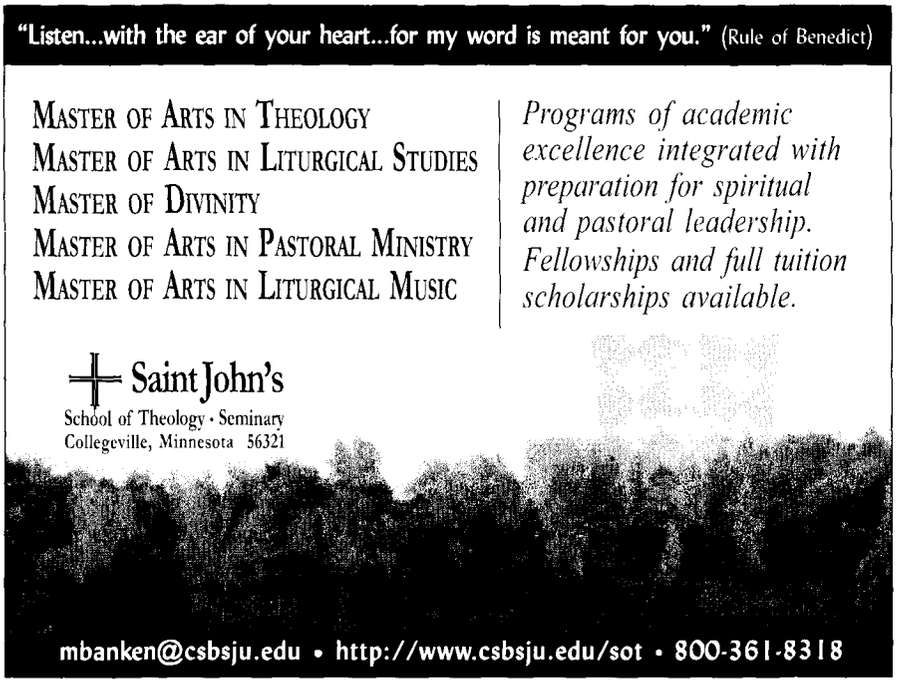
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central character who changes through time. The Bible becomes a *Bildungsroman* and "an enclosed complete text...like a garden in that doubling back to an earlier chapter is an experience rather like strolling back toward the garden gate to refresh one's memory of something already seen and to fix the plot (both gardens and novels are plotted) more satisfyingly in the mind." Miles acknowledges Hans Frei and Frank Kermode as influences, and his sense of literary form and reading aligns him more generally with the criticism that was called "New" in the forties and fifties and is now called "formalist." Such criticism finds a "pleasure and value" in literary works that "are established by inner articulation rather than outer validation." The critic of this persuasion finds the meaning of a literary work in the way its structural parts and recurrent patterns of imagery, mood, and motive work together. Our culture, Miles argues, has decided that the Bible is such a literary work, and reads the Bible as one, despite its manifold origins scattered across centuries. We do, in fact, return to it as to a plotted garden.

It is the repeated experience of looking (or "strolling") back to the gate that admitted us in Genesis that distinguishes Miles's reading from theological typology, which insists on looking forward and foreshortening time. His insistence on the continuity of God's character revealed by retrospection yields dozens of small surprises, like the description of the scene between Jesus and the Samarian woman as "the longest conversation between God and a woman." Such a judgment requires that we look as far back as Eve and bring her story into the same long plot. This approach also gives the book its arresting subtitle, *A Crisis in the Life of God*. Miles's long view of God's life sees God begin as an exuberant Creator whose love for his creatures, not yet that of a father, is marked by a capricious petulance that expresses itself in the eviction of Adam and Eve and the demand, withdrawn at the last minute, for the sacrifice of Isaac. God's love for his creatures then matures into that of a father for his chosen people, the descendants of Abraham. To them he makes grand political promises and, at first, delivers on them, most spectacularly when he marshals the forces of nature against the Pharaoh (actually a rival god) in Exodus. Eventually, however, to a growing chorus of complaint in Job and in the Psalms, God stops delivering. Apparently he cannot deliver. Creation has grown resistant to his power. In the Book of Esther, Israel has learned to be self-sufficient, neither receiving nor even asking for the Lord's help against the threat from Persia. It "plays collectively the same role that the Lord plays in Exodus." Under the stronger yoke of Roman rule, God faces an "impossible challenge." He must "somehow revoke the expectations aroused in his people by the Exodus from Egypt—expectations he knows he will never again meet—without altogether destroying his relationship with them."

His response to this "crisis" is his Incarnation and redemptive death on the cross. The atonement that this achieves is for an original sin that is God's rather than man's. Suffering and death are consequences of his eviction of Adam and Eve from Paradise, and he makes up for this petulant injustice by suffering and dying himself and then conquering death by rising again. The battle he wins is now spiritualized, extended beyond Israel, and waged on the plain of eternity, transcending (and leaving undisturbed) political arrangements that (he knows) will bring about the destruction of Jerusalem some forty years after his death.

This is a very rich book, filled with many more surprising insights than I have indicated or can indicate in a review. It is also deftly poised on the border between belief and unbelief. In that context, I can imagine a theologian asking Miles how God's omnipotence, eternal stability, and justice in the face of man's original sin fit into this reading? In fact, I think the book is oddly immune to that objection. Explaining God's seeming contradictions, the theologian might note that the Bible adjusts its inspired account of God to fit human comprehension. When God is said to err and repent, that is a metaphor for movements of his Spirit beyond the reach of our time-bound minds. The Bible is thus, in important ways, a nonrevelation of God. Miles, I think, does not need to dispute this point. His task is to interpret what the Bible does, in fact, reveal. The account he gives is as coherent as it is unsettling. □

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CAFFEINATED REALISM

The Corrections
Jonathan Franzen
Farrar, Straus, Giroux, $26, 568 pp.

Valerie Sayers

This may be the last review in America to chime in on Jonathan Franzen's gangbusters novel, *The Corrections*. For anyone who was on cultural leave-of-absence this fall, here's the story: after Franzen's novel was chosen for Oprah Winfrey's book club, he disdained her "logo of corporate ownership" and made other swipes. Oprah—no fool she—rescinded her invitation, but Franzen (who had published his first two novels to decidedly smaller-scale notice) skipped off with the National Book Award, *The Corrections* ensconced on the bestseller list with more publicity than even Oprah could have garnered.

So after all the to-do, mightn't the last reviewer in America be resistant to the charms of a novel that's been the subject of so many late-night jokes, news bites, editorials? So much gossip and praise? A novel that's made *so very much money*? I bring the matter up because, in fact, I disliked *The Corrections* at first and forced myself, a child taking her medicine, to read fifty pages at a time. Then, two-thirds of the way through, I softened and allowed myself to swallow it down whole. I was, finally, as charmed as Oprah herself must have been when she first announced her pick.

Though I don't want to discount any envious teeth-baring on my part, it is certainly true that this is a novel that depends, conceptually, on a broad satirical setup of one middle-American family, the Lamberts (note the "lamb" embedded in their name. One of the novel's major motifs is the lion). The Lamberts are Midwestern and middle-class: retired railroad man, aging homemaker, capitalist elder son, failed academic younger son, lonely celebrity-chef daughter. The younger generation of Lamberts think that they will be able to make corrections, to live more engaged lives than their parents have, but all five Lamberts are sad cases.

Franzen's method of introducing them is hyperrealist: He notices what any moderately sophisticated American might notice—what a fellow citizen is eating, wearing, discussing—and then makes a point of knowing more. He torments the reader with every last trendy food and clothing detail. At points I felt I'd been cornered at a party by an intelligent, sarcastic observer who could not stop talking and who, furthermore, was so superior to his subjects that he wasn't above making them sound mildly retarded. Here is the matriarch, Enid: "Questions of doctrine had always seemed to her forbiddingly complex, and Reverend Anderson at their church had such a kindly face and often in his sermons told jokes or quoted *New Yorker* cartoons or secular writers such as John Updike and he never did anything disturbing like telling the congregation that it was damned, which would have been absurd since everyone at the church was so friendly and nice..." For most of the novel, Enid is about that stupid. Franzen is so intensely focused on each character's consciousness that he appears to have climbed into that character's skin. Really, though, his method is more akin to shining a spotlight at his subjects till they—frightened, sleep-deprived—give up their most pathetic secrets. The second son, Chip, who has been fired for stalking a student, has sad sexual habits. Gary, the eldest, is a tight-fisted capitalist with a manipulative wife who's locked in mortal psychological combat with his manipulative mother. Denise, the baby of the family and the most sympathetic character throughout, is a media star whose sexuality is her deepest secret. And the patriarch, Alfred, whose Parkinson's disease has worsened to the point of hallucination, is either his wife's victim or a man incapable of making human connection, depending on whose version you buy.

In waltzing these lives past a reader, Franzen's narrative is deft, often dazzling. He'll embrace one of the Lamberts, then change partners in a swift, graceful move. Though most of the novel is caffeinated realism, Chip's sections—particularly as he becomes involved in a scheme to sell Lithuania as a corporate entity (yes! Lithuania)—read almost as cartoons, with Chip such a bad boy that the most apt comparison might be to Bart Simpson. The novel moves from New York to Philadelphia to Vilnius to the Midwestern family home in Saint Jude (note, again, the name), from the worlds of banking to screenwriting to Internet defrauding, all at breakneck speed and with a compulsive need not to leave anything out. Other satiric traditions depend on brevity for the soul of their wit (think Waugh or Spark), but this is American fiction! The stakes have been raised! Has to top DeLillo, Wallace, Eggers! Must be excessive, like America! Self-indulgent! (The worst indulgence here is a clever and ultimately exploitative execution motif.)

Franzen's coolly amused reportorial stance reminded me first of Tom Wolfe, but the surprising pleasure is his gradual move to warm sympathy for the souls he has been skewering. And the means by which he takes his generous stance is...Christmas. Christmas is the plot device that has fueled the story all along (Enid has been finagling to lure everyone home for the holidays) but in its last third, the novel shifts from a condemnation of contemporary American materialism to the possibility of family (and, by implication, human) forgiveness. The narrative has been dallying with philosophical questions, but now it lingers. An Advent calendar holds a mood pill named after C. S. Lewis's Christ-figure, the lion Aslan; it's a highly ironic image, and hardly an endorsement of religion, but one that acknowledges all our clumsy attempts at transcendence. Chip, the cartoon boyman, becomes a prodigal son by means

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which are not, in realistic terms, the least believable but which are, in narrative terms, joyful. I cannot say whether Franzen could have pulled off this miraculous redemption of his story had he not so cruelly set up his Lamberts as crass sinners, but I was sorry it took him so long to acknowledge their capacity for decency, and sorry it took me so long to see the breadth of his vision. □

Valerie Sayers, *author of five novels, is professor of English at the University of Notre Dame.*

FRED ALLEN ON CAPE COD

Writing New England
An Anthology from the Puritans to the Present
Edited by Andrew Delbanco
Belknap Press Harvard University, $29.95, 459 pp.

William H. Pritchard

In his preface to this handsomely produced book, Andrew Delbanco, a professor at Columbia and a well-known critic of American literature and history, imagines the anthology's readers to be "house guests spending time in the company of pictures and furnishings that matter to me and that seem to belong together." The ninety or so items he has chosen make up, he hopes, "a book for *reading*" rather than for the coffee table—and for reading that will reveal "a kind of family history." The doubleness in the title, *Writing New England* (the region didn't just produce writers, it got *written* by them) is typical of Delbanco's circumspection and sophistication in taking on a daunting task: that of being properly representative, various, and unobvious in assembling his house of materials.

The construction of the house is imaginatively done, with eight sections, each titled to comprehend a variety of items within. For example, "The Examined Self" moves from John Cotton, through Henry Adams, to Elizabeth Bishop and Dorothy West (the last represented by a chapter from her autobiographical narrative about growing up in Boston's middle-class black community). "Dissident Dreamers" starts with John Winthrop and moves through Hawthorne and Louisa May Alcott (a very amusing sketch titled "Transcendental Wild Oats") to John F. Kennedy and A. Bartlett Giamatti addressing, respectively, the 1963 Civil Rights crisis in Alabama, and a yet-again failure of the Boston Red Sox in 1977. Yet one needn't and shouldn't take the divisions too solemnly: Delbanco wanted to include Robert Lowell's "For the Union Dead" and did so in "Strangers in the Promised Land," a section composed mainly of writings by "outsiders"—minority voices such as William Apess and Frederick Douglass. But the Lowell poem could have gone just as well in "The Examined Self" or "Dissident Dreamers" sections—as could other pieces in the anthology.

In his introduction Delbanco more than once invokes Henry Adams (pages from whose *Education* describe his memorable walk to school with his grandfather are included in the "Education" section) by way of noting qualities of "New England nature"—self-criticism, chastisement, resistance—that have characterized its writers. One might wonder, though, whether such self-critical scrutiny of the social imperative couldn't also be found in the literature and criticism of nineteenth-century England, even of other parts of the United States—Dreiser in Chicago, Faulkner in the Deep South. When one remembers Wallace Stevens's notion of poetry as "imagination pressing back against the pressure of reality," we see how, necessarily, something like resistance is central to any verbal expression, whether encountered in story, poem, memoir, or sermon. So Adams's declaration in the *Education* that "resistance to something was the law of New England nature," may be the law of other natures as well.

That said, one sees how rich a field Delbanco had before him. In deciding, for example, to have a section titled "A Gallery of Portraits," which features a number of "exemplary" lives in fact and fiction, the choice must have been excruciating. The gallery that survives is composed of characters from the novels of H. B. Stowe and Elizabeth Stoddard; Miss Birdseye from James's *The Bostonians*; the "Cambridge ladies" of E. E. Cummings' poem; E. A. Robinson's Miniver Cheevy; fictional portraits from Marquand, Edwin O'Connor, Updike, and Cheever; plus a Thoreauvian writer new to me, Timothy Lewontin, who wrote about working in a Vermont sawmill. All these examples are fresh, usually unexpected. It also pleased me that a book beginning with seventeenth-century heavy-gun preachments like John Winthrop on Christian charity and Samuel Danforth on New England's "Errand into the Wilderness," should conclude with E. B. White writing appositely about Maine speech, and Fred Allen teasing the vocabulary of his local Cape Cod newspaper. And finally with Donald Hall's sardonic poem "Scenic View" in which he imagines how "In fifteen years / Monadnock and Kearsarge, / the Green Mountains / and the White, will turn / invisible, all / tint removed / atom by atom to albums / in Medford and Greenwich."

In his headnote to Hall's poem, Delbanco quotes the poet as saying in an interview, "I want to be a poet by myself, not a New England poet or a deep image poet or what have you." I wonder if others represented in *Writing New England* might not have similar sentiments: why, for example, should Frost's "Out, Out—" or Stevens's "The Snow Man" be singled out for inclusion here? Granted Delbanco's insistence that "New England is more than a geographical term," but how much space does that "more" give you? Enough evidently for him to include the second chapter of William James's *Pragmatism*. But if James, why not his colleague and rival George Santayana, writing on Harvard College

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or the genteel tradition in America? Why Robinson's "Miniver Cheevy" instead of his sonnet, "New England"? Was the latter too obvious a candidate? It would have been a nice way to introduce or conclude the volume. And since the reader Delbanco imagines has been invited to spend time amid some of the anthologist's favorite "pictures and furnishings," I can report that for this imperfect reader the items from Cotton Mather gave no more satisfaction or enlightenment than I received decades ago in graduate school, trying to make my way in his *Magnalia Christi Americana*. Nor did the seventeenth-century poet Edward Taylor, always remembered (as here) for one overquoted line ("Who in this Bowling Alley bowled the Sun?"), speak to me at last. (Could it be that New England writing got better as it went along?) But every reader has his blind spots; overall the anthology succeeds admirably in conveying, in Delbanco's words, "how New Englanders have come to live in different and distinct regions of cultural inheritance." It manages also, in its inclusions and rediscoveries, to extend Thoreau's remark in his "Ktaadn" section from *The Maine Woods* printed here: "I am reminded by my journey how exceedingly new this country still is." □

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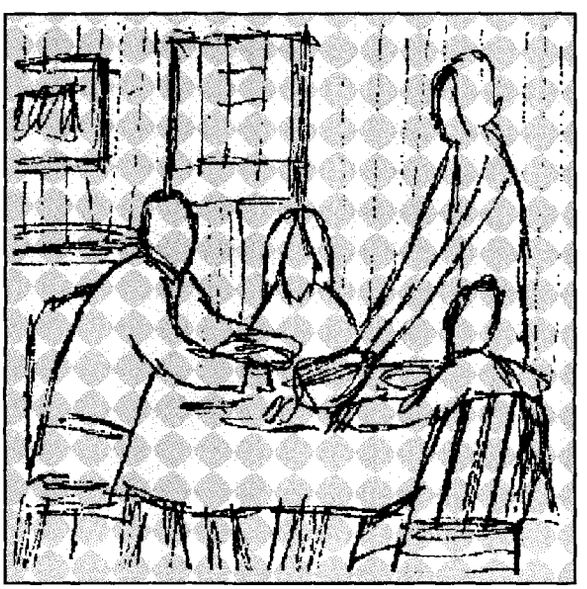
WHOLLY FAMILY

Ernest Ranly

Every family has its own genius and that genius is largely cultivated in play. Mass-produced games and fantasies can never replace homegrown ones. When I was growing up in the 1930s in rural Ohio we had a family game by the name of Magdalen. (The word is pronounced with a long German AH.) The name came from a great-aunt on my mother's side, whom I never knew. The game was a well-established tradition in our family that I simply accepted. It was a means of "playing house" by using paper cutouts from the mail-order catalogs of the day.

The game would begin afresh each winter when two huge mail-order catalogs (we called them Monkey Wards and Sears and Sawbuck) arrived. It was a great day when we found a new catalog lying aside the mailbox at the end of the lane, and we would come puffing up the hill by the barn with it. The new catalogs were carefully protected, but last year's became common property of all us kids.



To play Magdalen, each child first got a large piece of brown wrapping paper, in which catalog purchases from the past year had arrived. The paper was smoothed out, turned over, and marked off with our house of dreams, much like an architect's sketch of a one-story ranch house. We drew rooms, doors, and windows, and sketched out where we would place furniture. We saw pictures of dollhouses and all their miniature contents in the catalogs, but that was a fantasy world for us.

And then began the creative part. We had to make up, each of us, our own family. We did that by studying, very carefully, all the people pictured in the old catalogs. This time, what sort of father did I want? One dressed in a business suit or coveralls? Who would be my mother? How many children? What age and what sex? One by one, we made our selection and cut this year's family from last year's catalog. We cut with great care, not only so that our own people would be prim and neat, but we were not to ruin too much of the catalog because the other children still had to cut out their choices.

Then we had to furnish the house, picking out sofas, kitchen ranges, and iceboxes, the likes of which we saw only in the houses of our city cousins.

One could play Magdalen alone, but usually it became a group game with several of us on the sitting-room floor, looking over at the others to see how their family was doing.

We gave names to all the members of our "family." Play would begin, say, when Father came home to eat, Mother had dinner ready, and all the family sat around the table in the area designed as the kitchen. There would be family talk among all the cutouts. One could create a real soap-opera situation. Sometimes, one family would visit another. The possibilities were unlimited.

When playtime was over, each of us would carefully gather the cutouts and fold the brown paper inward, so that all the figures were safely protected. Then we guarded our little packages in a secret place until the creation of a new chapter in the unending Magdalen saga.

A boy could play Magdalen, retaining his machismo, until about the age of eight. Under the pretext of playing with her baby sister, a girl could play until her early teens.

With Magdalen, we made up our families from scratch. Unlike much of pre-packaged play for children today, our domestic dramas were free from monsters and cosmic conflicts. Instead, Magdalen had us act out each role in a given family in its various complex relationships.

Through Magdalen, we probably unconsciously acted out our personal life dramas. Thank God, no family therapist was observing us. I see something inherently healthy in all this. We had no TV, not the violence of cartoons, not the good shows like "Captain Kangaroo" and "Sesame Street." But I think Magdalen helped us gain self-identity and self-confidence, without becoming insolent or overbearing. The game, by definition, was active. No one could remain indifferent, passive, or aloof from life when playing it.

Sometimes I think Magdalen would be a great game to market to today's children. But that would be a contradiction. The very essence of Magdalen (and all good family games) is that it is spontaneous and, in a strict sense, unique. □

The Reverend Ernest Ranly *writes from Lima, Peru.*

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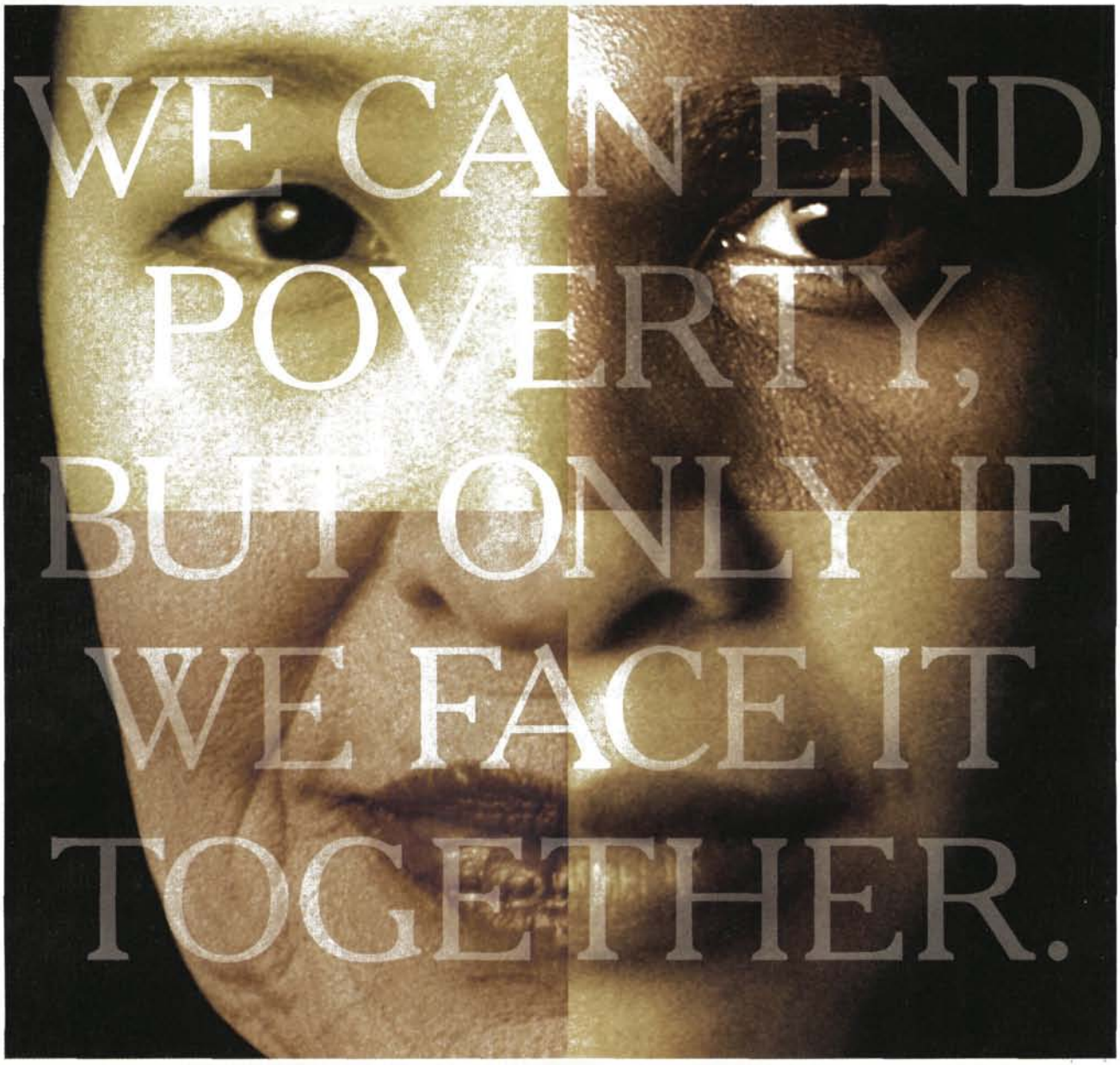

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